Eastern Region. However, it is upto the airlines to provide air services to specific places depending upon the available traffic demand and commercial viability of such operations subject to compliance of the Route Dispersal Guidelines.

(c) Ministry of Civil Aviation actively co-operates with Ministry of Tourism and Culture for the development of both Civil Aviation and Tourism industries in the country. Further, the present policies/ guidelines of the Government aim at achieving all round development in both the sectors.

(d) The aircraft purchased/operated by the airlines in the country must meet the requirements laid down by the airworthiness'regulatory authority of the country of manufacture of the aircraft as well as the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), which is the regulatory /airworthiness authority in India.

Air services from Srinagar for Haj Pilgrims

3092. MIRZA ABDUL RASHID: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have started a direct flight for Haj Pilgrimages from Srinagar to Jeddah Sharif;

(b) whether it is also a fact that 40 per cent Muslim population of Jammu Province is deprived of this facility;

(c) if so, whether Government will start such a direct flight for Hajis from Jammu to Jeddah Sharif from next year; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. The number of pilgrims who proceeded for Haj from Jammu Province is very small. As against a total of 5,672 pilgrims who proceeded for Haj-2002 from Kashmir Valley, the number of Pilgrims of Jammu Province is only 525.

(c) and (d) Starting a new embarkation point is a policy decision

which can be taken only after due consultation with M/o External Affairs and Central Haj Committee. Normally, the Government plans not more than one embarkation point per State, as many States do not have even one.

Service condition of employees of AI

3093. SHRI B.J. PANDA; Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of permanent employees of Air India as on 1st April and 1st October 2001;

(b) the number of employees as on 1st October 2001 who were in age group 55 to 58;

(c) whether it is a 'service condition' in Air India that employees in the above age group could be laid off; and

(d) if so, how many of them were laid off in the first half of this financial year?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN): (a) The total number of permanent employees in Air India as on 01.4.2001 and 01.10.2001 were 17185 and 16927 respectively which excludes 213 staff on 2 years leave without pay and 6 officers on deputation as on 01.04.2001 and 207 staff on 2 years leave without pay and 8 officers on deputation as on 01.10.2001.

(b) There were 1302 employees in the age group of 55 to 58.

(c) No, Sir. However, Air India Employees' Service Regulations applicable to officer / executives of the company and the certified standing orders applicable to workmen provide that the Managing Director may pass an order, if deemed fit, to retire an employee compulsorily, after he/she attains the age of 55 years. The Managing Director while passing any order of the above, shall consider as to whether it is in the interest of the company or in the public interest, to retain the employee in service or require him or her to retire compulsorily.